

more cause for alarm than in the fact that the rural-school term is far too short and that four-fifths of the rural schools are one-teacher schools, resulting in hasty and careless teaching, and that the opportunity for country boys and girls to have high-school education is all too slight * * * We owe it to the childhood of the Nation and the childhood of the agricultural districts of our land to place at its disposal the utmost in educational facilities.—*Warren G. Harding, President-elect.*

VII

WAYLAND'S *A HISTORY OF VIRGINIA FOR BOYS AND GIRLS*

Dr. Wayland has stated his aim very succinctly in the preface of this little book. "First, to be accurate in the truth of history; second, to be intelligible and interesting to young readers; third, to be helpful to teachers." This three-fold aim may well be used in evaluating the book. First, has he been "accurate in the truth of history?" To a man with Dr. Wayland's historical sense, this means far more than care in date and statement. Choice of subject matter and emphasis of topic play such a major part in shaping the opinions of the reader that they are vital in a really truthful portrayal. Our author is well able to meet this condition. It is evident that his problem has been not what to put in, but what, from all the wealth of material at his command, to leave out. This wide knowledge of his subject, this richness of background, gives him a perspective that enables him to write with a truer emphasis. This is seen in the fact that although he has written a history of Virginia, it is Virginia in relation to the South and the Nation. He has never for an instant minimized the glory of the Old Dominion's share in national and world history; the child who reads the book is invariably a more loyal Virginian, yet he cannot escape becoming also a better American.

This breadth of view, this sense of proportion is well illustrated in the treatment of Lee. Your heart thrills to see "Marse Robert" accorded full justice and placed among the world's truly great, but

there is no bitterness, no warped sectionalism. Lee's farsighted constructive attitude during the crisis following Appomattox is given proper space along with his glorious defense of Richmond. This impartial justice is seen also in the equal emphasis given to different sections of the state. Again, there is unrivaled adherence to "truth in history" in the choice of topics. There is much mention of Virginia heroes—towering as they do among the nation's leaders from Washington to Wilson—but on a whole the book is a chronicle of the *people* of Virginia, their joys and sorrows, their struggles for economic betterment and social justice. For instance, the child is made to live with his colonial forbears: he sees them as they struggle for a living; he stands by as they fight the Indians; he enters into their sports; he smiles at their dress and manner of travel. Such wealth of detail gives him the necessary background for appreciation of their early attempts to found schools, and their immortal experiment in self-government at historic Williamsburg. The treatment of this period is typical of the entire book; the outlook is not only political, it also social and economic. In wars for liberty, Virginia's share has not been neglected; rather her untiring struggle toward making the best possible use of liberty in her social structure has been recognized.

We will let the children speak for themselves in regard to the second aim. When the books were first put into the hands of our children, they read on and on after their assigned lesson was completed, "to see what was coming next." As one small girl put it, "It is a history book and it reads like a story." When pressed for a reason for this she said that it told the very things she wanted to know and that she liked the way the "words fit together." Wise young critic—in her naive way she had gone to the crux of the matter. The book is "intelligible to young readers" because it is no hodgepodge of facts for a rebellious child to memorize. Instead each chapter has a central theme, with supporting facts built around it in such a delightful narrative that the child's interest is constant. He gets the salient facts in such a rich setting of detail that he really grasps them, and can use them in his thinking. This careful organization is not the only reason that the book is a joy to

young readers. Strange as it may seem, we have here a text book for children that has style. It is so charmingly done that I have yet to see the adult reader who is not loth to lay it down unfinished. In the first place the diction is superb; Dr. Wayland not only knows history, he is an artist with words. Children of this age have a very keen appreciation for a well turned phrase, for the word that exactly fits. This style characterizes the entire book.

The following account of the V. M. I. cadets' part in the battle of New Market and their celebration there well illustrates the author's dramatic touch:

The battle of New Market has been widely celebrated because of the brilliant part taken in it by the cadets of the Virginia Military Institute. Those boys had marched down the eighty miles from Lexington, eager to strike a blow for the Confederacy. The only thing they feared was that the battle might go on and they be left out. But in the afternoon Breckenridge needed every man and called them in. They responded with such spirit and charged so gallantly and effectively across the muddy fields, in the face of a deadly fire, that their story has gone round the world.

Fifty years after the battle of New Market, and again in the month of May, the V.M.I. cadets marched down the Valley Pike to New Market. They went to celebrate in peace the valor of their fathers and grandfathers. And yet, by a terrible fate, before the year ended the World War had broken out in Europe, and the call of martial duty came to the boys of 1914 just as it had come to the boys of 1864. Stonewall Jackson's spirit came back and "Stonewall Jackson's Way" led again from the parade ground to the battle field.

Could anything be more unlike the dry narrative of the usual school text? Someone has said that all history is drama, then certainly Virginia history is. Dr. Wayland has realized this: we are all aquiver with excitement as the story unrolls itself before us. Yet never once is historical accuracy sacrificed. Experience with history teaching in the middle grades leads me to think that Dr. Wayland has read the heart of the child at this period. He has sensed the fact that he hungers for drama as he does for food and drink. And yet how lacking in this dramatic approach is the ordinary history text!

As a third aim the author has endeavored to lighten the load of the teacher and to point out a better way of teaching history. One of the chief difficulties in history teach-

ing in the middle grades is the making of assignments that will force the child to organize as he reads, that is, to study. Poorly written texts are responsible for much of the teacher's trouble in making assignments, but we have here a book with each chapter so well written that it materially lessens the task. There is added at the close of each chapter a carefully selected list of readings, both for the teacher and the child. This minimizes the amount of time the teacher must spend in the search for outside material, and enables her to concentrate on teaching the children how to read supplementary material for reports. This set of readings also sets a goal for the classroom library. There is constant emphasis on geography and civics throughout the book. There are maps and pictures, with hints as to their use. In addition, addresses are given where much fuller sets of pictures may be purchased. And at the close of many of the chapters, occur special suggestions for reviews, related language or geography lessons, etc. These suggestions are being amplified in a series of articles by the author beginning in this number of *The Virginia Teacher*. These various aids make the book a joy to the teacher.

Dr. Wayland has written the book with the needs of Virginia's future citizens in mind. It is a text book for Virginia children. I wonder if it is not also destined to a wide use outside the state. A history of Virginia is in many ways a history of the United States, and is interesting to all Americans. This book is so well written that it merits wide use as a supplementary reader all over the country. In fact it is a masterpiece of its kind; history done with a high regard for truth, and with the charm of a Stevenson romance.

KATHERINE M. ANTHONY

CITIZENS' CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

Following the National Citizens' Conference on Education held in Washington last May, the Commissioner of Education, Philander P. Claxton, has announced the organization of twelve regional conferences to be held this fall, according to *School Life*.